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### An interactive tracker for ceasefires in the time of COVID-19

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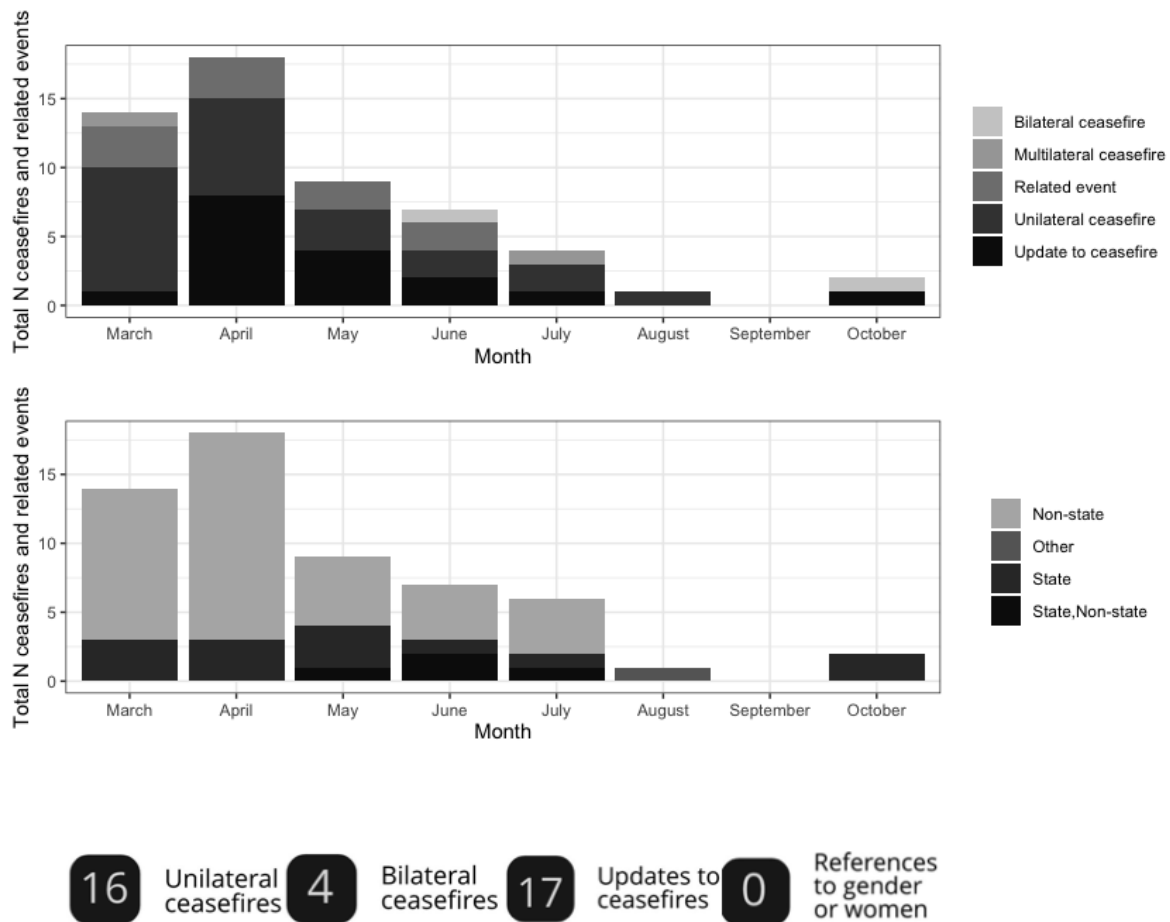


## An Interactive Tracker for Ceasefires in a Time of Covid 19

Covid 19 poses a distinct health challenge in conflict-affected states. Conflict is long recognised as a direct threat to health and a factor that complicates health-crisis responses.<sup>1</sup> Recognising these challenges, the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for a global ceasefire to stop violent conflict and assist addressing the pandemic on 23 March 2020.<sup>2</sup> In response, a number of organisations, including peacebuilders, researchers and mediators – notably the Mediation Support Unit of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs - came together to develop a ceasefire tracker which would also reflect health data and inform attempts to support ceasefires and pandemic responses in a coordinated way.

Data was collected using media reports and the expert knowledge of the organisations and their in-country partnerships and networks. It was facilitated by the design of back-end coordination mechanisms, by the Political Settlement Research Programme, University of Edinburgh, which enabled collaborative spreadsheets to be quickly uploaded and integrated with open access Covid 19 health data. The resultant ‘Ceasefires in a Time of Covid-19’ tracker provides data on ceasefires that have been called during the pandemic filterable with regard to whether the ceasefires were temporary or indefinite, and unilateral, bilateral or multilateral. It provides information on: the country location and geography of the ceasefire’s application; the ceasefire’s content with a link to the text if one publicly exists in written form; some indication of the conflict context; and links to previous ceasefires and peace agreements available on the PA-X Peace Agreement Database.<sup>3</sup> Critically, it enables ceasefires to be viewed alongside Covid 19 infection and death data pulled in real-time from the API from the John Hopkins University-Centre for Systems, Science and Engineering Covid19 dashboard.<sup>4</sup> The ceasefire tracker is provided for free in three different ‘views’: a filterable timeline of ceasefires, a searchable database, and a map view in which the Covid-19 death and infection rates and can be toggled on and off.

Several aspects of the ‘Ceasefires in a Time of Covid 19’ tracker have raised interesting insights on the relationship between the pandemic and conflict resolution efforts. Firstly, the UN Secretary General’s global call was not a ‘game changer’ in terms of conflict globally: despite initial ceasefire responses, the number of ceasefire declarations has decreased over time and fewer ceasefires are referencing Covid 19. Non-state armed actors have disproportionately responded, often with unilateral ceasefires that have not been reciprocated, sometimes for strategic reasons such as raising their profile internationally. However, in some areas where infection rates are high (Northern Syria), humanitarian ceasefires have been called.<sup>5</sup>



The ceasefire tracker forms part of a growing number of trackers that track not just health data relating to the pandemic, but social science data focused on the political fall-out of the virus, such as conflict patterns, or civic freedom – which themselves will have public health consequences. It forms part of our growing ‘PeaceTech’ approach to harnessing data and technology innovation to support peacebuilding initiatives and illustrate how data from different expert domains and of different types can be integrated and visualised.

For the Ceasefires in a Time of Covid 19 Tracker see <https://pax.peaceagreements.org/static/covid19ceasefires/>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Special Issue, Violence Conflict and Health, *The Lancet* 2010; **375**(9711), on myriad of relationships between conflict and health.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Global Ceasefire, <https://www.un.org/en/globalceasefire> (Accessed on 7 November 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Bell C, Badanjak S, Beujouan J, Forster R, Epple T, Jamar A, McNicholl K, Molloy S, Nash K, Pospisil J, Wilson R, Wise L. PA-X Codebook, Version 4. University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh: Political Settlements Research Programme, 2020; [www.peaceagreements.org](http://www.peaceagreements.org) (Accessed on 7 November 2020)

<sup>4</sup> Dong E, Du H, Gardner L. An interactive web-based dashboard to track COVID-19 in real time. *Lancet Infect Dis.* 2020; **20**: 533-534.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson TJ. Searching for Covid-19 Ceasefires: Conflict Zone Impacts, Needs and Opportunities. USIP, 2020; No **460**. [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/20200915-sr\\_480-searching\\_for\\_covid-19\\_ceasefires\\_conflict\\_zone\\_impacts\\_needs\\_and\\_opportunities-sr.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/20200915-sr_480-searching_for_covid-19_ceasefires_conflict_zone_impacts_needs_and_opportunities-sr.pdf) (Accessed on 7 November 2020)